

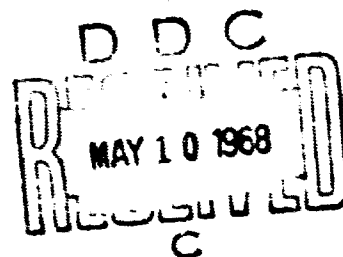
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THE GREAT FOREIGN POLICY DEBATE

Seyom Brown

April 1968

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RAND Corporation
Santa Monica, California

April 1968

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THE GREAT FOREIGN POLICY DEBATE

Seyom Brown^{*}

The RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, California

We have entered a period of great debate over the premises of United States foreign policy. We are leaving the period of the grand consensus behind.

The great debate is not merely over our policy for Vietnam. The Vietnam issue only brings to a head, dramatizes and forces the nation to choose between, competing views of the world and competing assumptions about the global role of the United States.

Nor is it simply a debate between the outs and the ins -- between Senator Fulbright and Secretary Rusk, between the Kennedy/McCarthy opposition and President Johnson. The personalities happen to be identified with some of the contending premises; but the contention between the premises is an underlying and deeper dispute which the political personalities ride, and in so doing often obscure their own inner debates in order to present a simple and compelling position to their public audiences.

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Behind the outward show of official unity the debate over fundamental premises exists within the Administration, often within the same agency, and sometimes within a single official. Any aware and sensitive member of the U.S. Government must today find himself torn by conflicting pictures of the basic trends in the world, and the proper U.S. actions to affect these trends in order to protect and advance what we value most.

This is the first time in over twenty years that the debate without and within the government is so clearly at the level of such fundamental premises. Since about 1947, and until now, the debates were always within a basic foreign policy consensus -- a consensus on a set of premises about our essential national interests, the threats to these interests, and the basic policies required to counter these threats. During the period of the grand consensus the debates were primarily over strategies and tactics for implementing the basic policy; but the basic policy and the fundamental premises on which it rested were not centrally at issue between the two great political parties, between the Executive and the Congress, or between leading figures in American political life.

Many of the foreign policy debates that have taken place within the grand consensus involved critical disagreements, in that the way they were resolved was bound to have wide-ranging implications for U.S. programs; and many of the disagreements, possibly, were rooted in the more fundamental conflict of basic premises we are now witnessing. At least in retrospect they can be read as advance signals of the current great debate. But at the

time, they were not admitted to be fundamental disagreements over essential premises underlying the grand consensus.

What was this grand consensus, which lasted for twenty years and only now is being seriously challenged in some of its assumptions?

The grand consensus can be stated as three basic premises:

1. The primary threat to the security of the United States is from Soviet expansion. This premise rests in turn on two other assumptions -- namely, that the Soviets are highly motivated to extend their rule to other areas; and that such expansion would eventually give them a preponderance of power globally that would enable them to dictate the conditions under which the people of the United States should live.
2. The only critical obstacles to Soviet expansion are those which ultimately must be provided by the United States. This premise assumes that no other nation or combination of nations is capable of resisting Soviet demands upon it, should there be an actual test of wills. And it obviously implies that military power is the main counter to Soviet expansionist tendencies. ("Force is the only thing the Soviets understand," said President Truman in exasperation to Secretary of State Byrnes after following, unsuccessfully, the early Harriman policy of attempting to modify Soviet policy with economic sanctions.)
3. The establishment of additional Communist regimes, or the territorial expansion by Communist countries other than Russia would add to the global power of the Soviets and their capacity to expand. This premise rests

either on the assumption that International Communism is a unified movement under the direction of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, or -- at least -- that most other Communist nations would be allies of the Soviets in any major U.S.-Soviet test of strength.

From all of these premises came the fundamental U.S. policy of "containing Communism" -- containing not just the USSR, but preventing the spread of communism as a political movement, preventing the expansion of Communist China, preventing the success of Ho Chi Minh's movement, preventing Castro-sponsored insurgencies in Latin America, and preventing the success, within non-Communist countries, of Communist political groups or groups that U.S. policy-makers believed would establish alliance or dependency relationships to one of the Communist nations.

This much from about late 1946 or early 1947 became the grand consensus, the basis of the so-called bipartisan foreign policy of the United States for the next twenty years.

The debate between the parties took place primarily within this consensus over strategies and tactics for implementing the containment policy. Disagreement on major questions of strategy and tactics was inevitable since the consensus did not extend to such questions as: (a) the priorities the Soviets attached to their various foreign objectives, and their capabilities to pursue these objectives; (b) the priorities the United States should give to keeping various regions of the globe free from Communist control; (c) the kinds of cooperative relationships between the United States and Communist regimes that were consistent with our over-all containment policy; and

(d) the approach the United States should take toward revolutionary change within the resource-poor countries.

Questions involving Soviet priorities and capabilities have been a chronic source of division within the U.S. Government. Early in the period George Kennan and Dean Acheson differed sharply in their assessments of the price the Soviets and other Communist nations would be willing to pay, the risks they would be willing to run, and the capabilities they possessed to carry out their expansionist objectives.

Kennan and others of his persuasion assumed that Russia was both patient and cautious in the pursuit of her objectives. She was unlikely to run very many risks of incurring high costs. Moreover, having suffered deeply at the hands of the Germans in World War II, she was not in a position to sustain the kinds of expansionist policies that would involve large-scale military operations. A United States foreign policy that was based on these assumptions would not need to engage in the kind of rapid buildup of West European military capabilities that the Achesonians were championing. A military backup to Western resistance to Communist expansion was necessary to hold in reserve, but, because of the basic caution of the Soviets, our diplomacy need only point to the war potential of the United States in a test of wills with the Soviets. Ready-to-march divisions of troops facing their Communist adversaries all along the periphery of the non-Communist world would be counterproductive, from the point of view of the Kennanites. Such a policy would first of all divert the energies of the non-Communist

nations away from their primary tasks of economic and political development. Subversion, not overt aggression, was the main threat. The policy of military rearmament of the North Atlantic nations would only stimulate an endless arms race with the Communist world. And it would increase the temptations on both sides to resort quickly to military threats as bargaining instruments in political disputes, and thus increase the risk of a third world war through miscalculation.

But those who, with Acheson, believed in a higher Soviet propensity to take risks in expanding their sphere of control won the debate within the U.S. Government. The Blockade of Berlin by the Soviets, and the invasion of South Korea by the Communist North Koreans sealed the case: Henceforth a visible military readiness to counter Communist incursions anywhere in the world became the teeth of the policy of containment.

Still there was not a sufficient agreement on the precise nature of Soviet capabilities and intentions to provide a viable consensus on U.S. military strategy and force planning. Competing doctrines of deterrence dominated foreign policy discussions during the 1950s. The question was how best to convey to the Communist states that their moves to impose their will on others would, in fact, be countered by whatever force was necessary to make such moves too costly for them.

The Eisenhower-Dulles approach to the problem of deterring Communist expansion was to threaten a total-war, nuclear response -- to visibly brandish "a great capacity," in Dulles' words, "to retaliate instantly, by means and places of our own choosing." This posture was to be

supplemented by a string of military allies hemming in the Soviet Union and China. The allies would have their own forces, whose purpose would be mainly to offer the initial resistance to aggression. It was our commitment to come to the defense of these allies, however -- our commitment to fight, not in a long war of attrition on their soil, as in Korea, but with our advanced sea and air power -- that was the centerpiece of the Eisenhower Administration's strategy of deterrence. The assumption was that we would never have to actually unleash our massive retaliatory capability so long as the Communists continued to fear that we were ready to reply to aggression with weapons and targets of our choice, and that we would not limit our response to the battlefield chosen by the enemy. The prospect that these weapons might be thermonuclear, and that their targets might be cities was supposed to be sufficient to deter. (In this respect, Dulles was like Kennan, in that he attributed great prudence to the Soviet leadership.)

However, the "massive retaliation" strategy as proclaimed by the Eisenhower Administration did not rest on a broad-based consensus of military and strategic expertise. Indeed, it went against the emerging consensus of most American strategists in the 1950s, most of whom perceived that however necessary the capacity for massive retaliation was to deter the Soviets from a massive attack upon the United States, it might be insufficient to deter the Soviets from lesser attacks and provocations.

Those who doubted the sufficiency of a massive retaliation capability coalesced around an alternative strategic doctrine that stressed an across-the-board

preparedness to fight at all levels of warfare -- the doctrine that had been advocated by strategic experts in the Truman Administration when assessing the implications of the coming Soviet intercontinental nuclear arsenal, the doctrine that General Maxwell Taylor dubbed "flexible response," and argued for unsuccessfully as Army Chief of Staff during the Eisenhower Administration, the doctrine that was institutionalized as the Kennedy-McNamara strategy in 1961.

The flexible responders argued that the Soviets' willingness to run risks in aggression was affected by our willingness to run risks to oppose them, and that the Soviets would disbelieve our willingness to risk destruction of our cities for any purpose other than deterring Soviet direct attacks on us, or to avoid losing a war to the Soviets.

Thus, so the argument went, the Soviets would be tempted (Secretary Rusk called it "the crime of tempting thieves") to engage in territorial grabs and provocations of a limited nature, underneath our threshold for all-out response, unless we had a capability and a clearly communicated intention to resist limited provocations with limited means proportionate to the interests at stake.

Such a flexible response capability would demand an increase in U.S. capabilities for non-nuclear war and for counterinsurgency, with higher military budgets than required under the Eisenhower-Dulles strategy. Paradoxically, the Kennedy Administration, dedicated in spirit to Kennan's counsel to rely less on the military tools of diplomacy, found itself in the position of contributing to an acceleration of the arms race. Even the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty

was finally defended by Secretary McNamara before skeptical Congressional committees as a means for preserving our over-all military superiority. The President championed the Test Ban as a détente-producing measure; but even in his advocacy, the sanction behind the mutual will toward détente was the capacity on both sides for total annihilation (despite our superiority), and the balance of military power below all-out war. Since victory was unlikely for either side in a limited war, and escalation to total war was suicidal, there was no recourse but to shift to nonmilitary modes of competition. Yet the nonmilitary competition had to take place within an atmosphere of potential holocaust, with each side armed to the teeth and compensating with improvements in its own forces for any observed, or suspected, improvements in the forces of its adversary. The arms race, in one form or another, would continue.

With regard to military strategy, at least, the institutionalization of the essential premises of flexible response seemed to resolve the debate. There was debate at the margins -- over the role of tactical nuclear weapons, over anti-ballistic missiles and whether it was possible to significantly limit damage to the United States in a thermonuclear war, over the control of nuclear weapons in the NATO alliance; but there was now consensus on the necessity of maintaining a ready fighting capability, at least as good as the Russians', across the entire spectrum of warfare.

Another series of debates that has taken place within the grand consensus of United States post-World War II

foreign policy concerns the relative value of our various foreign commitments, our hierarchy of interests, our assessments of the difference it would make to the global balance of power if certain countries came under the sway of one side or the other or became neutral.

Although there has been general consensus in U.S. policymaking circles that a Communist takeover of a previously non-Communist country would be "against our interests," the price we would be willing to pay to prevent or reverse such events has varied, depending upon which country is the object of this concern, and depending upon the subjective judgments of various policymakers.

The weighing of interests and their costs occasioned intense debate within the U.S. Government on a number of crises during the past twenty years. The Truman Administration, for example, experienced severe internal divisions over how much we should expend and risk to prevent Mao from gaining control of China during the late 1940s. Truman attempted to prevent the outcome through military and economic assistance and political persuasion; but when Chiang's position continued to deteriorate to the point where only a large-scale intervention with U.S. forces could possibly reverse the tide, Truman, subjected to conflicting advice, liquidated our commitment and helped evacuate Chiang to Formosa. The President's assessment, finally, was that the costs of losing China to communism, however great, would be less than the costs in U.S. blood and treasure of taking up the battle against Mao on the mainland. It would be unfortunate, but the absorption of China into the Communist world would not critically tip the global balance of power. Later, during

the Truman-MacArthur controversy, the Republican opposition criticized this assessment; but in the 1947-1948 period the majority of Republicans in Congress were no more anxious than the President to raise the resources and men required for a direct U.S. intervention.

Similarly, during the Korean War the dispute between MacArthur and Truman over the military campaign involved differing assessments of the value of the tactical objective (Korea) as opposed to our strategic interest in balancing Soviet power globally. Truman and his closest advisers regarded the North Korean invasion as a diversionary ploy masterminded by the Russians to get us to drain our resources in a long war of attrition on the Asian mainland, while the Soviets were presumably preparing to launch a successful aggression for the main prize: Western Europe. MacArthur was willing to risk a war with China in order to obtain a decisive defeat of Communist forces in Korea. Truman was willing to settle for a military stalemate in Korea if that would keep the war within its current geographical confines and help bring hostilities in Asia to a close.

The same kinds of considerations played upon President Eisenhower in 1954 over the question of intervening in Indo-China to save the French from defeat by Ho Chi Minh. The Eisenhower Administration was severely split at the highest level among those who regarded a victory by Ho as catastrophic and those who stressed the even greater catastrophe that would come from U.S. intervention. At first Eisenhower appeared to be siding with those who regarded Indo-China as a critical weight in the global balance of power -- or, as the President put it, the first

domino in a line of dominoes which would all fall if the first one fell. Later, however, when the costs and risks of proposed U.S. military operations were presented to him in detail, Eisenhower saw a greater negative effect on the global balance of power from the resource expenditures we would have to bear, as a direct belligerent on the Asian mainland. And he also apparently came to regard the Indo-China war as a trap deliberately set for us by International Communism, just as Truman and Acheson regarded the Korean War.

The basic position on this issue held by the Truman Administration, and ultimately adopted by the Eisenhower Administration, is, in the current Vietnam debate, the position of important critics of the Administration. General James Gavin has called our involvement in Vietnam, as the main military force opposing the Viet Cong, a tactical escalation that harms our world strategic position. George Kennan calls Southeast Asia a "remote and secondary theatre," and claims that our involvement there represents a "grievous misplacement of emphasis." But the President and the Secretary of State, defending our need to spend \$30 billion a year and exceed the casualties suffered in the Korean War, argue that we cannot afford to lose in South Vietnam, that the global balance of power is at stake right there, that the Vietnam war is the "test case" of the Communist strategy of wars of national liberation, presumably the last chance to contain the waters, the plug in the dike, or, in Richard Nixon's happy phrase, "the cork in the bottle." Underlying the Administration's position is the notion that our commitments, our "word," as the President puts it, is at stake; and it is the faith

in our commitments that holds up the defenses against Communist expansion all across the globe. Also underlying the Administration's position is the notion that, if we failed to stand and fight in Vietnam, the Communist nations would be encouraged to grab any other area that we might define as of "secondary" rather than "primary" strategic importance. If we would pay a high price only to defend the primary areas, the Communists will be encouraged to nibble us to death in the secondary areas.

Such arguments pro and con over our involvement in Vietnam still operate within the grand consensus of containing Communist expansion. These particular arguments are over the means, and do not centrally confront the basic premises of the grand consensus itself.

There are aspects of the current controversy over Vietnam which do put at issue the basic Weltanschauung of U.S. foreign policy, but these are best viewed in the context of the larger debate whose outlines will be characterized below.

Continuing with the debate within the grand consensus, there are differing approaches to still another problem: how to coexist with those Communist nations with whom we are not at war. How much friendliness and normal economic, diplomatic and cultural intercourse is consistent with effective opposition to their expansionist purposes?

This issue was faced during the early Cold War period. Even then, when the shock of recognition of the basic unfriendliness of Soviet purposes was freshest, there were many officials within the State Department who genuinely hoped for Soviet and East European participation in the European Recovery Program (Marshall Plan). To these

officials -- and Secretary of State Marshall himself was of their view -- the target of our policies should be the economic maladjustment which was making European societies vulnerable to subversion by Communist movements. The revival of Western European economic vigor, which was based in large measure on manufacturing, would be facilitated by the raw material resources that once again could be tapped in the East European areas. East Europe in turn could provide a market for the West's manufactured goods. To maintain an advantageous balance of power against the Soviet Union the West needed a strong Western Europe; it did not require an unhealthy Eastern Europe.

Marshall acted upon this counsel -- which was by no means unanimous within the State Department -- and did extend the offer of economic cooperation to all European nations; but the offer was not accepted anyway by the Soviets who suspiciously viewed the U.S. efforts as a tactic to undermine Russian economic control of Eastern Europe. To many in the U.S. Government, the Soviet rejection of participation in the Marshall Plan, followed shortly by the Communist takeover in Czechoslovakia, and then the Berlin Blockade, indicated that the bipolar world was really two worlds in total competition. International relations could henceforth be the province of the strategic game theorists, and be regarded as a "zero sum" game: that is, whatever benefits one side, hurts the other, and vice versa. From this point of view, any policy that would contribute to the well-being of the opponent was bad policy. Policies that might contribute to the opponent's economic development were to be especially avoided, since

they would provide the opponent with a better basis for making war on us.

Cooperation with and economic assistance to Tito's Yugoslavia was regarded as an anomaly, as the reward for Tito's defection from the Soviet Bloc. It was not thought that any other Communist country had a sufficiently nationalistic regime to follow Tito's example, nor would the Soviets tolerate any more defections. But even cooperation with Tito proved to be a controversial policy within the United States -- easier for a Republican Administration to pursue than either of the Democratic Administrations.

After the 1956 uprisings in Poland and Hungary, the Administration experimented with more cordial relations with Poland, and even with cultural exchanges with the Soviet Union -- justified to critics of any intercourse with the devil as a means for exposing the devil's victims to alternative, and more attractive, models of social organization in the West. But all U.S. policy moves in this direction, however tentative and experimental, continued to be opposed by the zero-summers, particularly in the Congress.

The splintering trends within the Communist Bloc in recent years have given added plausibility to the notion that increasing economic and cultural relations, "building bridges" as President Johnson calls the policy, will allow greater Western penetration of the Soviet sphere of influence and thereby contribute to a reduction in Soviet power, relatively speaking. Others go farther and see East-West intercourse as stimulating socioeconomic changes within Soviet society, leading toward greater economic and

political liberalization, more catering to consumer demands and less of a propensity to allocate resources to external adventures. From some scholars and members of Congress, such a policy is urged for China also; and the Administration has responded by defining its China policy as one of "containment without isolation." But the verbal flexibility has yet to be reflected in a flexible diplomacy. We still have not modified our opposition to United Nations membership for Communist China. And the Vietnam war has revived the arguments and political weight of those Americans who see any favors extended to any Communist nation as tantamount to helping the enemy load his guns.

Finally, within the grand foreign policy consensus there have been strains and ambivalences in what is often called our "Third World" policy. There have been divisions in the policymaking community over the importance we ought to attach to events in the resource-poor areas of the globe, and then, who and what we wanted to support.

The Truman and Eisenhower Administrations viewed the Third World in geopolitical terms, as primarily a rimland containing the vast Sino-Soviet heartland. The important task was to strengthen this rimland against Sino-Soviet expansion which, when it came, would be essentially in the form of armies marching across borders. Assistance to the Third World countries was mainly to create local military barriers to Soviet and Chinese aggression, as assurance that there would not need to be deployments of American troops in the rimland.

Our aid was therefore primarily to regimes who would be our military allies, or in the case of neutrals, baksheesh

to prevent them from becoming too friendly with our enemies. This explains the relative neglect of Latin America and Africa -- neither of whom were thought to be in the path of Sino-Soviet expansion.

During the Eisenhower Administration, however, and prompted largely by the Middle East crises of 1956, 1957, and 1958, there began to be challenges offered to the existing policy of trying to create local balances of power in the Third World by signing up military allies. The challengers (Walt Rostow was then a leading academic critic, John F. Kennedy a Congressional critic) argued:

---That we were backing the wrong forces; that combustible populist nationalism, the egalitarian passions of the new urban masses, and student radicalism were the popular currents in these countries; that many of the regimes we were outfitting with military equipment were out of tune with these popular currents, sometimes holding on to power for dear life, and sometimes using economic and military assistance from the United States as a means for redressing their weakening domestic power base.

The Administration, it was argued, was playing a losing game -- both for the local leaders we were backing and for us, internationally, since the Soviets were ready to back the radical nationalists.

A similar critique was made from within the Eisenhower Administration by Douglas Dillon, Milton Eisenhower, and Nelson Rockefeller concerning our policies toward Latin America. The intellectual groundwork for a new Third World policy was being laid, but believers in the older policy still ruled the roost.

The Kennedy Administration was able to start fresh, however, or at least thought it could, with a new set of premises, helped along considerably by Khrushchev's intensified stress on "wars of national liberation."

The Third World policy that President Kennedy attempted to institutionalize was based on the primary premise that the Third World countries would either remain aligned, become satellites or dependent allies of one of the superpowers, or, in less direct ways facilitate the use of their territory and resources by one side or the other more as a result of the basic processes of politics within these countries than as a direct result of favors granted or threats made by the superpowers to existing regimes.

A secondary premise in the new Third World policy was that the political balance of power within these countries, as literacy and exposure to global communications spread within their populations, would be weighted on the side of leaders and groups sponsoring wide redistribution of wealth and political authority -- i.e., the idea of social justice was assuming real political flesh.

The conclusion drawn for U.S. foreign policy was that the United States would lose influence in these nations, and over their ultimate choice of friends and benefactors in the international system, unless we identified ourselves with those social and political forces demanding greater social justice.

To the extent that the Third World was now a more important arena of competition for influence between the superpowers, and to the extent that the mode of competition was changing to one of providing attractive models for,

and assistance in, social transformation, the premises concerning the most immediately relevant tools of our power were bound to change.

The capacity to deter aggression by our major adversaries, and a fighting capability to deny them territorial gains in case deterrence failed, were still necessary ingredients of our power internationally. But these ingredients would have to receive relatively less attention than previously. Their influence over the course of social transformation in the Third World was seen to be very small, except for areas under the threat of direct overt aggression, for even the violent conflicts in these areas would be primarily of a paramilitary kind in which factors other than our great wealth and weapons superiority would determine the outcome.

But this policy would require a continuation, indeed an increase in foreign assistance -- which meant that the Congress would also have to be convinced of the desirability of supporting the radical nationalists, many of whom did not regard our system of economics and government as worthy of emulation. Congress required a simpler national security rationale. And when Kennedy, through the Clay Committee on foreign aid, tried to provide this simpler rationale, the Congress didn't really believe the Administration was as interested in fighting communism as it was in sponsoring radical change.

The Congressional attitude was not unwelcome to many in the Executive agencies who did not completely buy the new policy premises brought in by the New Frontier and its economist friends from Harvard and M.I.T.

Although all of these debates have taken place within the grand consensus of the containment policy, they have progressively sharpened our awareness of the implications of that policy, and have at times even spilled over into more fundamental questions -- questions about the very premises which form the consensus itself.

Moreover, the truth and contemporary relevance of the older premises are now being seriously called into question by the new facts of international politics -- particularly the obvious changes taking place within what used to be thought of as the Soviet Bloc.

Among some of the architects and implementers of the grand consensus, and among many in the policy community who wrote books and articles in its justification, it is now considered to be debatable whether the primary threat to the United States is from Soviet expansion. The assumption that the Soviets are nearly as highly motivated in practice, as in their rhetoric, to extend their rule to other areas is no longer taken as a given. Nor is it as readily assumed that we face a real prospect, if we allowed the Soviets to act on their motivations, of the Soviets gaining such a preponderance of power globally that they could dictate the conditions under which the people of the United States should live.

It has become debatable that the only critical obstacles to Soviet expansion are those which must be provided by the United States; that no other nation or combination of nations is capable of resisting Soviet demands upon it should there be a real test of wills. The military-technological factors of power which made the USSR and the United States the relevant powers in the international

system are no longer accorded the weight and respect they were at the outset of the Cold War.

And it is debatable that if one or another country is taken over by a Communist regime that this will automatically add to the power of the Soviet Union and its capacity to expand. In the words of Dean Rusk, "The Communist world is no longer a single flock of sheep following blindly behind one leader." Even should there be a U.S.-Soviet or a U.S.-Chinese test of strength, many doubt that most of the other Communist nations would be firm allies of the Soviet Union or Communist China.

Inescapably, these fundamentals of the grand consensus itself are now being debated within the government no less than in lay forums and academic journals.

If the outcome of this great debate is a rejection of the basic premises underlying the containment policy (and it very well may be), what will be the consequences for the role of the United States in world affairs? If the justification of fighting communism for security or balance of power reasons is gone, what is left as a compelling reason for asking the people of the United States to allocate a part of their resources and energies to help other peoples?

President Kennedy started out attempting to purge the foreign aid program of Cold War rhetoric, but found he had to return to the simpler national security rationale in order to pry funds from the Congress even to support the Alliance for Progress. President Johnson has a difficult enough time getting Congress to provision the War on Poverty in this country, let alone the war on poverty in Asia and Africa. The Legislature, Johnson knows very well, is a

broker for domestic constituent interests who are jealous of any diversion of resources to foreign objectives. Without the national security rationale, or without a grand moral crusade, the Congressmen sense that their constituents will not take kindly to legislation that will apportion a good share of the tax dollar to foreign objectives.

President Kennedy attempted to anticipate the period we are now entering by admonishing his countrymen to assist the poorer countries of the world "not because the communists may be doing it, not because we seek their votes, but because it is right."

Well, here we are, when the Communists are not doing it successfully, and when our efforts to help do not gain us votes in the UN or other indications of approval. Is the ethical premise -- that it is right -- sufficient to move us to care? Or will there be an increasing pessimism concerning: (a) our ability to really understand what is going on in the poorer countries, and (b) our ability to significantly affect such events anyway.

Will we distort the concept of "self-help" to a kind of international Social Darwinism -- the survival of the fittest to modernize?

Already we hear the question: Why should we get excited about the poverty and misery of others? It doesn't affect our security. It doesn't help us to secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity.

Thus the collapse of the premises sustaining the grand consensus may leave a void -- a void which traditional American isolationism is ready to fill.

But to revive the twenty-years' consensus would probably be futile -- unless the Communists would cooperate by uniting against us in monolithic hostility. It would not be wise to bank on this hope.

Rather, if we are to sustain a sufficiently compelling national concern with the fate of other peoples on this planet -- sufficient to be reflected in our willingness to sacrifice a good chunk of our comforts to help alleviate their misery, new premises are required that will establish connections between our essential purposes as a people and the fate of others.

Secretary Rusk talks of "organizing the peace." But that has the whiff of Pax Americana about it, and suggests a pursuit of order ahead of constructive social change. It seems to neglect the fact that disorder may be a necessary part of the basic changes that are needed to alleviate the misery associated with the status quo in many parts of the world.

Our challenge is to fashion a compelling rationale for our continued participation in the process of social change, a rationale that dispenses with the clichés and platitudes of the past, a rationale that truly conveys a sense of responsibility for what happens to others less blessed by certain material accidents of history, yet a rationale that expresses respect and admiration for the cultures and traditions of others.

It must be an honest rationale, but also one that moves us. Concurrent with all the pessimism and despair prevalent in the United States, which is in part the product of our sense of having lost our mission to the world, there is evident a still fitful emergence of

psychological currents that may bring forward this new rationale.

The decline of the ideology of anti-communism which we are witnessing could express itself in nihilistic withdrawal and isolation. But it has another side: a recognition that the function of our power is larger than the protection of what we have -- that the function of our power and wealth is to provide the surplusses of energy, invention, and material resources for a fuller participation in global community building activities: in laying the networks of international connection, the communications networks, the transportation networks, the commercial networks, the scientific exploratory networks, the channels for cultural and artistic intercourse and cross-fertilization that will break down the artificial barriers that men of different nations have erected between one another.

This could be a task that resounds in the memories of our own historical experience, that is reflected on our coins in the motto E PLURIBUS UNUM -- from many, one.

The new premises for United States foreign policy, if I read the temper of my generation correctly, must be fashioned out of this sense of mission, or else we shall withdraw bitterly into our deceptively secure fortress. This is the meaning of the great debate now taking place.